

Some Parents and Other Stakeholders' Offer Perspectives on Alternative Communication Methodologies in Response to the Push for More Auditory-Oral Resources

8-15-05 to Present

The following are quotes from parents' and other stakeholders' letters, presentations, and legislative meeting minutes. In the wake of increasing political momentum toward Auditory-Oral education, these individuals offered their perspectives on a comprehensive communication philosophy.

Parent presentation to SBOE sub-committee – *"Dividing our kids into one camp or the other camp does not serve us well. Sign language should not be considered a last language, just as cochlear implants should not mean that they cannot learn to sign. I respect parents who choose auditory verbal methods and I ask those parents to please respect my [child] for who he is. Because he signs does not mean he is contagious."*¹

Parent presentation to SBOE sub-committee – *"First, let me say that I do not believe the quality of education that a child receives should be dependent upon what method of communication is selected by a family... I would hope that this does not turn into a method vs. method or us against them situation... No place in the law does it require that the school system take responsibility for the medical treatment of a child's diagnosis... The outreach person assigned to us when my [child] was young assisted me with the research process of all the choices available to us and let our family select what we felt was best without any pressure or judgment. Once a decision was made we were supported in that decision and the work to educate my child and monitor his language development was tireless. I thank them for that."*²

Parent letter to SBOE Sub-committee – *"I respectfully ask that you remember that the majority of children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in Idaho do not have cochlear implants. The vast majority of deaf and hard-of-hearing children are not candidates for a cochlear implant... For a very few, a conscious decision has been made to not implant their child. This decision can be made for a plethora of reasons and usually deals with honoring the individual needs of the child and family. As with any medical procedure, there is also a group that has had a cochlear implant that has found it to be unsuccessful."*³

Letter from Parents to CDHH – *"A common misunderstanding is that amplification cures or fixes the hearing loss... American Sign Language (ASL), a complete manual language, provides this strong foundation and becomes the springboard for students' English language acquisition, and even benefits oral training and speech reading... Lack of a complete language promotes the common misunderstanding that deafness itself affects intelligence and ability. When deafness itself is the assumed culprit for poor performance, emphasis is often simply placed on auditory and oral skills, thus beginning another cycle of misunderstood and therefore poorly facilitated educational services... We are part of a growing team of parents who desire a dual language (American Sign*

¹ Presentation from a parent to the SBOE sub-committee on ISDB (11-10-05)

² Presentation from a parent to the SBOE sub-committee on ISDB (8-16-05)

³ Letter from a parent to the SBOE sub-committee on ISDB (8-18-05)

Language and English) approach... These elements would finally grant deaf and hard of hearing students access to an education in a truly least restrictive environment.”⁴

Letter from a Deaf organization to the SBOE Sub-committee – “Approximately 90% of the 122 families [in Deaf Connection] use sign language as their main mode of communication...”⁵

Presentation from a Parent to the SBOE Sub-committee – “I would like to see the committee analyze the education of the whole child...this should not be a resource battle between those who raise their children Auditory-Orally and those who employ signing.”⁶

Exchanges between Senator Bunderson and ISDB Graduates at the SBOE Sub-committee Meeting – “Senator Bunderson asked the [former ISDB deaf] students if things had been different and it was affordable, would they have chosen cochlear implants... [The student] responded ‘probably not.’... She also suggested students need good role models, and even with cochlear implants, sign should be taught.”⁷

Presentation from a Parent to the SBOE Sub-committee – “...success depends on as many options for communication as possible.”⁸

Comment from ISDB Superintendent, Harv Lyter – “...success is the degree of intervention, rather than a communication medium.”⁹

Presentation from a Parent to the SBOE Sub-committee – “[The parent] shared some of his [child’s] experiences and talked about the deaf culture. He believes in total communication, but also believes you need to help students understand the history of the deaf culture, the history of sign language, have role models, etc.”¹⁰

Presentation from an ISDB Graduate and Former Staff Member to the SBOE Sub-committee – “When he was a student, and when he was staff, he saw some students who did not want to go home [from ISDB] because parents would not learn sign and so they could not communicate”¹¹

Letter from ISU Professors to CDHH – “...the literature documents that Deaf children of Deaf parents do very well socially, emotionally and most importantly academically, when educated in a Bi-Bi¹² approach. Their English literacy skills...are proven to be as good as hearing students, if not better.”¹³

⁴ Letter from parents to CDHH (4-28-05)

⁵ Letter from the President of Deaf Connection to the SBOE sub-committee on ISDB (8-11-05)

⁶ Presentation from a parent to the SBOE sub-committee on ISDB (8-16-05)

⁷ SBOE sub-committee on ISDB meeting minutes, excerpts from former ISDB graduates (8-16-05)

⁸ SBOE sub-committee on ISDB meeting minutes, excerpt from parent of a mainstreamed child with a cochlear implant (8-16-05)

⁹ SBOE sub-committee on ISDB meeting minutes, excerpt from ISDB Superintendent, Harv Lyter (8-16-05)

¹⁰ SBOE sub-committee on ISDB meeting minutes, excerpt from a parent of a mainstreamed deaf child (8-16-05)

¹¹ SBOE sub-committee on ISDB meeting minutes, excerpt from an ISDB graduate and former staff member (8-16-05)

¹² “Bilingual-Bicultural education is an approach to educating deaf children that incorporates the use of American Sign Language (ASL) as the primary language of instruction in the classroom. English is taught as a second language through reading and writing print” (Choices in Deafness: A Parent’s Guide to Communication Options, 2nd Edition, Edited by Sue Schwartz, 1996, pg. 89, paraphrased from Reynolds, 1994).

¹³ Letter from ISU Professors to CDHH (11-4-05)

